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ABSTRACT

Small clusters of teachers in four schools in the Detroit Public Schools, in cooperation with Wayne State University, have pioneered an on-the-job project designed to try out several ideas that have been increasingly discussed and analyzed in the literature on inservice education. These teachers, along with preservice education students, school building administrators, inservice personnel, and university faculty, helped shape a program that treats preservice and inservice education as distinct but related stages in professional development. The broad concept of a preservice-inservice, school-based program was presented to selected principals in the school region who were in turn asked to invite the participation of interested teachers. A major emphasis in this project has been for teachers to examine their curriculum and instructional programs and identify specific features they would like to improve or change. After this examination they work with inservice consultants on designing and organizing curriculum and instructional modifications for their classrooms. The goal is to develop small modules or units. The extent to which teachers have been successful in changing their curriculum varies from school to school and from teacher to teacher. Some have planned, organized, and used curriculum modules; some have incorporated different activities and materials into their instruction; others have simply tried out certain ideas and methods, such as questioning strategies and brainstorming techniques. There has been little effort so far to examine the impact of curriculum changes on children. (DMT)

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# INSERVICE EDUCATION: AN "ON-THE-JOB" APPROACH FOCUSING ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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# INSERVICE EDUCATION: AN "ON-THE-JOB" APPROACH FOCUSING ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

David K. Wallace

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For the past two years, small clusters of teachers in four schools in the Detroit Public Schools, Region Six,[1] have pioneered an on-the-job project designed to "try-out" several ideas which have been increasingly discussed and analyzed in the literature on inservice education. These teachers, along with preservice education students, school building administrators, inservice personnel, and university faculty, have helped shape through their participation a program that treats inservice education and preservice education as distinct but related stages in professional development.

Most important, these modern day teacher-explorers have focused their attention on familiar territory - namely their own schools and classrooms, and have begun mapping alternative ways to foster growth and learning for children and colleagues. Like many reconnaissance expenditions, the going has been slow and often bumpy.

## A VIEW FROM THE OUTSIDE

What is described here relates to the role of the project coordinator, who has had the unique opportunity to view the program as an administrator, "outside" the various school settings, and also as an inservice - preservice consultant "inside" one particular school building. Certainly the outside view is important for a general description of major features and processes of the program, but it is what has happened inside, at the building level, that gives substance and meaning to those features and processes.

The intent is to examine core elements of the Preservice - Inservice Curriculum Consortium in which Wayne State University and the Detroit Public Schools, Region Six are participating, and then take you inside a specific urban school for a brief look at the organization and operation of a school level inservice program.

### Teacher Participation and Continuous Professional Growth

Philip Jackson, writing about inservice education, describes two contrasting perspectives about the business of helping teachers improve their work. One perspective, the "defect" point of view, rests on the assumption "that something is wrong with the way practicing teachers now operate and the purpose of in-service training is to set them straight - to repair their defects, so to speak."[2] The other, perspective, the "growth approach" assumes "that teaching is

a complex and multifacted activity about which there is more to know than can ever be known by any one person. From this point of view the motive for learning more about teaching is not to repair a personal inadequacy as a teacher, but to seek greater fulfillment as a practitioner of the art."[3]

The latter perspective, the growth approach, has been an implicit, yet central element in our inservice thrust. The notion that professional development is a continuous, life-long growth experience has glowed dimly but persistently, like "foxfire", in the background of each school's inservice program.

Operationally, this approach has been kindled and fueled by the participation of teachers in decisions about the inservice activities to be carried on each school setting. In an effort to overcome past practices, where inservice education has been designed, planned, and conducted for teachers by persons in authority,[4] this program has been attempting to increase teacher involvment in the planning and management of their own inservice activities, in their own schools. Based on assessments of needs and interests, teachers have been making collective and individual choices about the content and structure of their inservice activities. At times, they have worked with each other as resource persons, or provided materials and activities for school level workshops.

The fact that teachers participate in the program for an extended time period, ranging from ten weeks to an entire school year, gives them and the inservice support team time to develop the procedures, guidelines, and trust necessary for mutual decision-making. We have found that the process requires patience and a willingness to work within a framework that encourages and accepts different professional needs and expectations. This is not something we all do with ease.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development has come to mean many things to many people. Curriculum development models and curriculum projects have grown so rapidly in recent years, that the educational marketplace is seemingly alive with ideas, activities, and approaches for improving teaching and learning. Unfortunately, most inservice efforts to improve teaching have not dealt "directly with helping teachers improve their skills in instruction or become more adept at planning and organizing curriculum."[5]

A major exphasis in this project has been for teachers to examine their curriculum and instructional programs and identify specific features they would like to improve or change. After this examination they work with inservice consultants on designing and organizing curriculum and instructional modifications for their classrooms. The goal is to develop small modules or units.

An important dimension of this approach has been that curriculum making should focus on substantive themes and contexts. For example, in those activities where teachers have worked on curriculum modifications designed to achieve literarcy advancement in writing, speaking, and reading, an effort has been made to encourage teachers to develop learning activities that utilise concepts and skills from the disciplines. Simply put, pupils should be reading and writing, and applying math and science skills to "something".

The extent to which teachers have been successful in changing their curriculum in this way varies from school to school, and from teacher to teacher. Some have planned, organized and used curriculum modules, others have incorporated different activities and materials into their instruction, others have simply tried out certain ideas and methods, such as questioning strategies and brainstorming techniques.

There has been little effort so far to examine the impact of curriculum changes on children. Some teachers have tested children to find out if they understand new concepts, but there has been no systematic comparative evaluation of new and old or different approaches to learning. This does not mean that teachers and inservice consultants have been lazy or uninterested in this dimension of curriculum development. Rather, it seems to reflect the reality that when teachers engage in expanding their skills and understanding of curriculum development during the day, for one or two hours per week, it takes a long time to learn all aspects of curriculum making and evaluation.

Collaboration

The notion of various institutions and individuals working together on common tasks has been important to the professional education of teachers for several years. A decade ago, leaders representing a broad spectrum of educational agencies examined the merits of collaboration in a publication, Partnership In Teacher Education. Even then, it was a concern that "no institution or agency can successfully go it alone in the education of teachers, either preservice or inservice".[6] Today, it seems more evident with shrinking budgets and growing pressure for educational accountability, that schools, professional organizations, state departments, and community agencies need to work together. The emergence of consortia, networks, and various cooperative arrangements throughout the country demonstrates the growing opinion that past differences need to be set aside, and that common goals be pursued through cooperative efforts.

Wayne State University and the Detroit Public Schools have been leaders in establishing the spirit of collaboration in the Detroit area. The Team Internship Program, the Professional Year Program, the Trainers of Teacher Trainers (TTT) Project, and recently the Detroit Center for Professional Growth and Development are some of the collaborative programs initiated by these two urban institutions.

Out of this tradition of collaboration, the Preservice-Inservice Curriculum Consortium was born. Certain key individuals from the Detroit Public Schools and Wayne State University, who had been actively involved in the TTT Projects' efforts to establish field based programs through parity program planning, facilitated the development of a local network of individuals and institutions interested in trying out the ideas of parity decision-making and curriculum and instructional development in local school settings with inservice and preservice teachers.

Lacking funds from outside sources,[7] and with an eye toward working in the mainstream of existing teacher education programs, this small cadre of "movers" adopted the strategy of infusion, and focused their attention on Wayne State University's, field based undergraduate teacher education program, Interdisciplinary Teacher Education (I.T.E.). Professors and school personnel in the cadre, who had been working together in the I.T.E. program in Detroit Region Six for some time, saw the on-going structure of I.T.E. as an opportunity to provide resources and support to teachers in schools where I.T.E. students were clustered, and to explore the merits of a coordinated inservice - preservice approach.

From the outset, the project has operated on funds and resources contributed by each participating institution. The time spent by teachers, university professors, and inservice consultants in the project has been part of their regular institutional commitment. No special funds have been allocated to pay for school

level participation. Support from community agencies, such as automobile and newspaper companies in Detroit, has been in the form of consultant help and visits by teachers and inservice staff to corporate facilities. Collaboration in this project has been "grass roots" collaboration, with each participating institution providing resources and personnel.

First Steps

At the outset of the first year (1974-1975), the university and school system "movers" in the I.T.E. program presented the broad concept of a preservice-inservice school based program to principals and assistant principals of Region Six schools in which the I.T.E. program was operating, and to a few other principals who were recommended by the Region Six central administration. General goals and a tentative plan of action were discussed at the meeting. The plan called for identifying three or four schools in which clusters of teachers (three to eight teachers in each building) wanted to work on improving their curriculum through a school based inservice program. They also needed to be interested in working with a preservice education student. Teachers' participation was to be voluntary, not assigned. It was suggested that administrators invite teachers who might be interested in working on an integrated approach in social studies. (The focus shifted to all the discipline areas in the second year, 1975-1976). Finally, it was recommended that each teacher make a commitment to participate for the entire school year, with the option to withdraw at anytime.

Following the orientation meeting, the building administrators extended invitations to teachers in their schools. From among the schools represented at the orientation meeting, three expressed an interest to participate. Two middle schools had clusters of four teachers each, and an elementary school had a cluster of three teachers.

Later in the first year, and throughout the second year, a few teachers withdrew from the project and several new teachers in each of the three buildings joined the project. A cluster of teachers in a fourth school joined the project in the second year.

It is not altogether clear why some teachers have withdrawn. In two or three cases, the teachers said they had been coerced to join, and got involved only to please a department head or principal. Others have indicated the program failed to meet their needs. By in large, however, most of the teachers who have entered the program have continued to participate because they feel it is worthwhile. Most have experienced frustration and confusion along with success, and have directed their experiences toward improving the operation of the program in each school setting.

## A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

Working for two years in an urban school with teachers and undergraduate education students has provided insight into how to organize and operate a school based inservice - preservice program. What follows is a description of the school setting, and the program's structure within the school.

The School Setting

The elementary school described here is essentially like most urban schools. Physically, the building is a large, two story brick structure, constructed several decades ago. The rooms are moderate size with hardwood floors and high ceilings, and the walls are painted either a pale green or beige. Desks are arranged for the most part in rows to accomodate up to thirty six pupils. There is limited space for storage and display of materials. The halls are long and lined with lockers. Approximately eleven hundred children attend the school, and there are forty nine teachers on the faculty. The school administration incudes a principal and assistant principal.

From conversations with the principal during the first week of the program, it was revealed:

> That inservice experiences for teachers were usually workshops and seminars held away from the school.
>
> That regularly scheduled curriculum days in the school were usually devoted to planning and evaluating achievement objectives (all schools in Detroit are required to devise and evaluate achievement plans every year).
>
> That there was little time or opportunity for teachers to work individually or cooperatively on curriculum during the regular school schedule.
>
> That some teachers had supervised Wayne State student teachers and I.T.E. students, and that the school staff was generally supportive of working with perservice students.

The Organizational Structure

Within this school setting, the following structure for carrying on continuous inservice and preservice activities has been created. The number of teachers participating in the program has expanded from three (the original cluster) to eleven.

> The Instructional Team : Undergraduate students who volunteer to participate in the program as assistent teachers, are placed with classroom teachers who have volunteered to work on improving instruction in their classrooms. They plan and teach together basing some of their instruction on experimental plans developed with the service team.
>
> The Service Team: A university professor and a school system supervisor "live in" the school one full day every week following initial orientation meetings when teachers describe their needs and interests, and formulate objectives for accomplishing the improvements they want to make.

The governance of this building level inservice program is lodged in the collaborative structure of the weekly seminar in which teachers and the service team work together in planning and developing resources for inservice activities. Decisions regarding instructional team goals and objectives are made in three-way conferences (classroom teacher, assistant teacher, university professor, or school district consultant). The conferences also provide an opportunity for the service team to help assistant teachers analyze their teaching.

## REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

An initial discovery made in this setting is that teachers have little experience working in the roles of "co-teacher" and "curriculum developer," and that it takes a great deal of time to get comfortable in those roles. Teachers, who had worked with student teachers in the past, initially perceived their role to be an observer-critic, rather than a co-teacher, who plans and teaches cooperatively with a co-teacher, (an assistant teacher). Furthermore, they had never experienced leaving their classroom with the assistant teacher in charge for an extended time period, in order to meet in an inservice seminar to work an curriculum development. Those teachers who had never worked with student teachers were confounded at times by the conflict between autonomous teaching (something they had down all their lives) and co-teaching. Most of the teachers were seemingly unsure about how to develop curriculum. On several occassions teachers expressed their concern about the lack of adequate preparation for working in those roles. Even with the creation of a handbook, which included role descriptions and suggested expectations, teachers found that becoming effective in these roles was a difficult task. It has been recommended by several teachers, that next year before school begins, the Consortium conduct a workshop where teachers can model and simulate skills necessary for co-teaching and curriculum development.

A factor, which has emerged as crucial to the nurturing of growth for inservice teachers, preservice teachers, university faculty, and inservice consultants, is the need for establishing and maintaining mechanisms for interpersonal communication. The seminars and three-way conferences have been helpful. But all participants, especially the inservice team, need to encourage interpersonal relations that are open and free. The assistant teachers and the inservice teachers must feel free to tryout new ideas and activities, and feel confident in the trust they have placed in the service team to give them feedback which is non-threating and constructive. Furthermore, there is a need to provide feedback which validates that what a person is doing in curriculum and instruction is appropriate and productive.

The two principles, that seem to have been the most significant throughout these two years, have been patience and a willingness to spend time. The daily "press" in this urban school, as in others, seems to sap time and energy. Working together only an hour or two per week seems too short a period of time to accomplish much. But, because all of us have been patient, and made the commitment to work in this kind of a program for a long time, we have been able to bring about small changes, and are optimstic about the future.

## FOOTNOTES

1. This project has also been working with clusters of teachers in four schools in Center Line, Michigan.

2. Jackson, Philip W. "Old Dogs and New Tricks: Observations on the Continuing Education of Teachers." Improving In-Service Education: Proposals and Procedures for Change. (Edited by L.J. Rubin.) Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971. p. 21.

3. Ibid., p. 26.

4. Edelfelt, Roy A., and Lawrence, Gordon, "In-Service Education: The State of the Art." Rethinking In-Service Education. (Edited by Roy A. Edelfelt and Margo Johnson.) Washington D.C.: National Education Association, 1975 p. 11.

5. Ibid, P. 14.

6. Smith, E. B., and others, editors. Partnership In Teacher Education. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and Association for Student Teaching, 1966. p. v.

7. During the winter and spring, 1974, Education Development Center, Social Studies Program, "People and Technology" Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts participated as a member in the Consortium.